



# Research Report

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# 24

## RESPONSIBILITY, MORALE, AND COMMITMENT DURING MILITARY OPERATIONS

When soldiers feel responsible for their performance, they will try their best to achieve a goal, persevering in the face of obstacles. Personal responsibility and commitment are important military concepts and are frequently mentioned in Field Manuals ("FMs"). However, it is not enough to tell soldiers "to be responsible" for their actions. Studies conducted by the US Army Medical Research Unit-Europe examine what causes soldiers to feel responsible for their performance, as well as what causes soldiers to become disconnected from their job and career.

### Background

The "Triangle Model of Responsibility" is a general model of responsibility and self-engagement that provides a framework for service member responsibility and commitment in diverse missions. The model suggests the following factors as promoting strong feelings of responsibility, commitment, and morale during deployments:

- **Rule Clarity:** A clear set of rules details what is required for superior performance (e.g. If an enemy threatens a soldier, the soldier can respond appropriately).
- **Mission Relevance:** The soldier views the mission as relevant to his or her training (e.g. If a soldier goes on a peacekeeping mission, he or she is given additional training; soldiers believe that the mission is relevant to their professional development).
- **Personal Control:** The soldier has personal control over his or her behavior on the mission, performing out of a desire to do well, as opposed to simply following orders (e.g. rules of engagement are robust enough to give soldiers feelings of efficacy; rules for off duty activities are not so restrictive that they are seen as arbitrary).
- **Mission Importance:** The soldier views the mission as something that is important and worthwhile (e.g. on peacekeeping missions soldiers believe they are serving a useful purpose by allowing the possibility for peace to thrive).

Responsibility, commitment, and morale are a direct function of the strength of these factors. As each factor is reduced, responsibility, commitment, and morale decrease. That is, responsibility, morale, and commitment are greatest when the rules for performance are clear, the soldier perceives the rules as relevant to training, the soldier exercises personal control over the event, and the soldier believes in the importance of the mission.

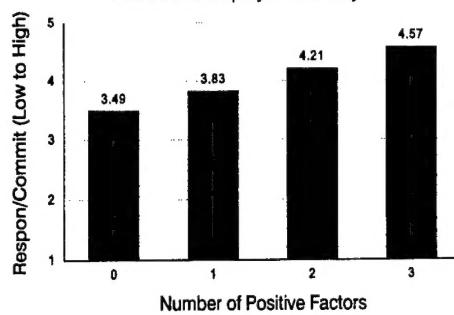
### Testing the Model: Patriot Air Defense Artillery Task Force to Saudi Arabia

The task force was surveyed by a human dimensions research team during a contingency operation to Saudi Arabia. The survey consisted of questions assessing rule clarity ("The guidelines for my job are clear"), mission relevance ("I am doing what I was trained to do"), personal control ("I have personal control over my job"), and mission importance ("What I am doing on this mission is important"), as well as responsibility ("I feel responsible for my job performance"), commitment ("I am committed to doing well in my job"), and feelings of disconnection from one's job ("I feel disconnected from my job").

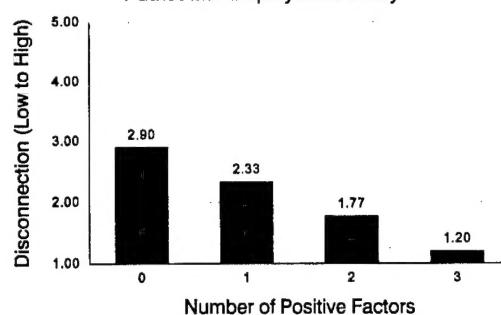
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Results of standard multiple regressions revealed that rule clarity, mission relevance, and personal control independently influenced soldier feelings of responsibility and commitment, and job disconnection. As seen in Figures 1 and 2, responsibility, commitment, and job connection were greatest when soldiers felt the guidelines for their job were clear, they were doing what they were trained to do, and felt personal control over their job. As each factor decreased in strength, so did responsibility, commitment, and degree of job connection. Analyses also showed that soldiers felt more responsible for and committed to their job when they were doing something important.

**Figure 1: Responsibility/Commitment as a Function of the Number of Positive Factors**  
Patriot Mid-Deployment Study



**Figure 2: Job Disconnection as a Function of the Number of Positive Factors**  
Patriot Mid-Deployment Study

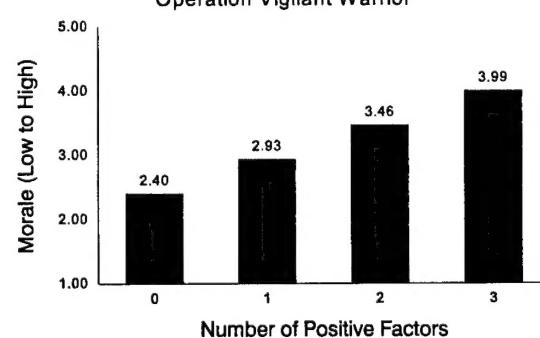


### Testing the Model: Operation Vigilant Warrior

Operation Vigilant Warrior involved a build-up of American forces on the Kuwait border as a result of threatened aggression by Iraq. Soldiers were surveyed during their deployment by a human dimensions research team on rule clarity ("I am briefed regularly by my leaders"), mission relevance ("What I am doing on this mission is what I have been trained to do"), personal control ("What I am doing during this deployment helps accomplish the mission"), and mission importance ("I feel that what I am doing during this deployment is important"), as well as morale ("My personal morale is good right now").

Results revealed that rule clarity, mission relevance, and personal control independently predicted morale. Figure 3 plots morale as a function of the number of positive factors present. Morale was highest when soldiers were briefed about the mission, were doing what they were trained to do, and felt they were contributing to the mission. As each factor weakened, so did personal morale. Results also showed that morale was higher when soldiers thought that what they were doing was important.

**Figure 3: Morale as a Function of the Number of Positive Factors**  
Operation Vigilant Warrior



### Leader Actions to Increase Responsibility, Commitment, & Morale

- Create clear expectations for performance and indicate what constitutes mission success
- Insure soldiers feel personal control over their performance, no matter how strict the rules of engagement
- Give soldiers proper training for their mission, so they perceive their role on the mission as relevant to their job
- Emphasize the importance of what soldiers are doing and the "higher order" ethic of doing a good job on whatever the mission calls for

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) USAMRU-E Research Report #24  The "Triangle Model of Responsibility" is a general model of responsibility and self-engagement that provides a framework for service member responsibility and commitment in diverse missions. The model suggests the following factors as promoting strong feelings of responsibility, commitment, and morale during deployments: Rule Clarity (a clear set of rules details what is required for superior performance), Mission Relevance (the soldier views the mission as relevant to his or her training), Personal Control (The soldier has personal control over his or her behavior on the mission, performing out of a desire to do well, as opposed to simply following orders), Mission Importance (the soldier views the mission as something that is important and worthwhile). Research is summarized showing that responsibility, commitment, and morale are a direct function of the strength of these factors. As each factor is reduced, responsibility, commitment, and morale decrease. That is, responsibility, morale, and commitment are greatest when the rules for performance are clear, the soldier perceives the rules as relevant to training, the soldier exercises personal control over the event, and the soldier believes in the importance of the mission. Recommendations for leader actions to improve responsibility, commitment, and morale are provided.			
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